

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF IDOL IMMERSION IN GANESH CHATHURTHI

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing awareness on environmental problems among public. Water pollution which also includes pollution in lake, sea, ponds and rivers is one among such pollution. The practice of immersing idols is one of the traditions of Hindu festivals. Such immersion of idols which are made of chemicals and toxic paints may sometimes lead to pollution. The chemicals are dangerous in such a way that it may endanger the lives of human beings and aquatic organisms. This article deals with the environmental impact caused by immersion of idols.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 History of Ganesh Chathurthi

Ganesh Chathurthi also known as Vinayagar Chathurthi is a humongous festival celebrated all over India that endures for ten days that is observed to celebrate the birthday of Lord Ganesha. This festival ends on the fourteenth day which is commonly known as Ananth chathurdashi on a grand note where the Ganesh idols made of clay are immersed in water. The epic festival is commemorated throughout India especially in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala.

1.2 Ganesh Idols

Ganesh Chathurthi marks making of Ganesh idols among one of the rituals practiced in Ganesh Chathurthi. Ganesh idols are brought home and installed at each and every home and even in public places. The Ganesh idol is anointed with pure water, honey, milk and it is decorated with garlands. Lord Ganesh is offered modak on this day as it is his favorite sweet dumpling.

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Ganesh idols are usually made of clay. But now days Ganesh idols are made of paper Mache, metal and plaster of Paris. Making of Ganesh idols out of clay is said to be earth friendly whereas idols made from plaster of Paris possess toxic chemicals in it which is harmful to the environment. The paint which is applied for the idols also tends to damage the environment in the process of immersion into water.

The practice of immersing Ganesh idols into water is observed due to the spiritual science that idols made out of clay uses a renewable resource such as soil and in the process of immersion it gets dissolved in the sea thus releasing clean air making the earth warm. Clay idols do not cause hazardous effects and it consumes only little energy in making which is not possible in plaster of Paris idols.

People must celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi with the intention of protecting the environment that is gifted by god to all of us. Usually the event is revered with several accessories like plastic flowers, cloth, incense sticks, camphor and many other materials which are also immersed into water along with the idols thus straining the rivers which are already polluted. The hazardous waste which is entering the sea tends to damage the marine eco system. The aquatic organisms lose their fertility after consuming the toxic chemicals present in the sea.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The Research paper is zeroed on the repercussion emerging after idol immersion on the eve of Ganesh Chaturthi especially when idols are made using toxic chemicals and paints which are detrimental to the marine ecosystem. The Research paper also hints the possible ways to overcome the environmental impact of idol immersion.

1.4 Objectives of Research

- To identify the aftermath effects of idol immersion.
- To ensure environmental preservation on the day of observing religious festivities through explaining Guidelines framed by Pollution Control Board.
- To analyze the extent of impairment made to rivers during the process of idol immersion.
- To establish the significance of Eco-friendly Ganesh idols.

1.5 Review of Literature – Environmental Impact on Certain Rivers

1.5.1 South Gujarat Rivers

According to Malik G.M Chloride was found within the stipulated limit for drinking water standard. Chloride increased after idol immersion at all sites except Rander and Nanpura of Tapi river. High chloride reacts with sodium and makes water salty in taste. It also may increase TDS values of water. Chlorides is not usually harmful to people. However, the sodium part of table salt has been linked to heart and kidney disease. Sodium chloride may impart a salty taste at 250 mg/l. however; calcium or magnesium chloride is not usually detected by taste until levels of 1000 mg/l are reached.

1.5.2 Kakerpura Lake Mhow

According to D.K.Billore the minimum transparency in Kalkerpura lake Mhow is observed in month of August because of increased amount of particles were added due to

surface run-off (Rainy season). It was observed between levels of 25-27 cm in immersion period due to total dissolved solid particles and in post immersion period it was as high as 33 cm. Dissolved O₂ (DO) having great importance in water quality monitoring and it considered an important factor which reflects physical & biological processes in water body. Dissolved oxygen is one of the important parameter for the assessment of the solubility of water for flora & Fauna.

1.6 Environmental Impact of Ganesh Chathurthi

1.6.1 Plaster of Paris

Ganesh idols made of Plaster of Paris are largely used in Ganesh Chathurthi festival as it is economical. Plaster of Paris is inexpensive because of its inferior quality and it is not environmentally friendly in nature. Plaster of Paris causes irreversible environmental impact to the coastal eco system when it is immersed in water. It takes months to dissolve in water.

The plaster is manufactured as a dry powder and is mixed with water to form a stiff but workable paste immediately before it is applied to the surface. The reaction with water liberates heat through crystallization and the hydrated plaster then hardens. The most common types of plaster mainly contain either gypsum, lime, or cement. When idols using plaster of paris is immersed in water it remains undissolved in the coastal banks of river which is hazardous to the earth. At this point of time eco-friendly Ganesh idols has come as a relief to the eco system as it is not hazardous to the environment and earth friendly.

Plaster is made by calcinations of gypsum. Plaster of Paris is made by subjecting gypsum to high temperatures. The mixing of water with plaster causes an exothermic chemical reaction that releases heat. This heat helps to harden the Plaster of Paris allowing it to set. When a doctor sets a plaster cast to hold broken bones together he uses a little extra water. This extra water helps absorb the excess heat released, while some heat is lost to the surroundings. The large surface area of the cast also helps to dispel the heat of this chemical reaction evenly.

SUGGESTION

2.1 Eco-Friendly Ganesh Idols

The birth story of Ganesha says that Goddess Parvathi mother of Lord Ganesha created him using her natural bathing ingredients. Ganesh idols are now days made in an environmentally friendly way such that it does not harm the earth. Ganesh idols are now days made with bio degradable materials such as paper pulp and clay which do not detriment the environment at large. The following are the noteworthy points about eco friendly Ganesh idols

- Ganesh idols have to be disposed properly in such a way that it does not harm the environment.
- Ganesh idols must be painted with natural dyes.
- Ganesh idols using shadu clay which is mostly found on the river banks of Rajasthan and Gujarat are apt for the environment in order to avoid pollution.
- Ganesh idols have to be self made using paper pulp or clay.

2.2 Guidelines of Pollution Control Board

- Idols should be made from natural materials as described in the holy scripts. Use of traditional clay for idol making rather than baked clay, plaster of Paris, etc. may be encouraged, allowed and promoted.
- Painting of Idols should be discouraged. In case idols are to be painted, water soluble and nontoxic natural dyes should be used. Use of toxic and non biodegradable chemical dyes for painting idols should be strictly prohibited.
- Worship material like flowers, clothes, decorating material (made of paper and plastic) etc. should be removed before immersion of idols. Biodegradable materials should be collected separately for recycling or composting. Non-biodegradable materials should be collected separately for disposal in sanitary landfills. Clothes may be sent to local orphan house(s).
- Public should be educated on ill effects of immersion in the holy water bodies through mass awareness program.
- The 'Idol Immersion Points' shall be cordoned off and barricaded. Synthetic liner may be placed in the bottom, well in advance. The said liner shall be removed on completion of immersion ceremony so that remains of idols would be brought to the bank. Bamboo and wooden logs, if any would be reused. Clay, etc may be taken to sanitary land fill for disposal.

CONCLUSION

The birth of Lord Ganesh who is said to be the God of beginning and wisdom is celebrated on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi. This occasion has to be celebrated without causing any damage to the environment especially water bodies which is created by God and gifted by him for human beings. An environmentally friendly Ganesh idol has to be used to celebrate it to prevent any hazards made to rivers, lakes, sea & ponds.

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